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ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

मुण्डक उपनिषत्

Chapter 3

Section 1

Volume 22

48. सत्येन लभ्यः तपसा हि एष आत्मा  
सम्यक् ज्ञानेन ब्रह्मचर्येण नित्यं ।  
अन्तः शरीरे ज्योतिर्मयो हि शुभ्रो  
यं पश्यन्ति यतयः क्षीणदोषाः ॥ 3 - 1 - 5

49. सत्यं एव जयते न अनृतं  
सत्येन पन्था विततो देवयानः ।  
येन आक्रमन्ति ऋषयो हि आप्तकामाः  
यत्र तत् सत्यस्य परमं निधानं ॥ 3 - 1 - 6

The Upanishad is now talking about ज्ञान साधन ज्ञानं - the means helpful for gaining आत्म ज्ञानं - Self-knowledge, the personal qualities one must cultivate in full measure in order to become fit for gaining आत्म ज्ञानं - Self-knowledge. As we may recall, Sri Krishna points out 20 such personal qualities in Chapter 13 of भगवत् गीता (अमानित्वं, अदम्बित्वं, अहिंसा, क्षान्तिः, अर्जयम्, etc.) and we will see more of them in the chapters we will be seeing a little later. The Upanishad here highlights only a few such qualities, and they, in effect, stand for all the qualities necessary for gaining आत्म ज्ञानं - Self-knowledge. The Upanishad says:

48. सत्येन लभ्यः तपसा हि एष आत्मा  
सम्यक् ज्ञानेन ब्रह्मचर्येण नित्यं ।  
अन्तः शरीरे ज्योतिर्मयो हि शुभ्रो  
यं पश्यन्ति यतयः क्षीणदोषाः ॥ 3 - 1 - 5

एष आत्मा सम्यक् ज्ञानेन लभ्यः  
एष आत्मा - This आत्मा

अयं आत्मा ब्रह्म - This आत्मा, The सत्यं-ज्ञानं-अनन्तं ब्रह्म, The परमेश्वर already in every self as the Self I Itself, This आत्मा can be gained, can be reached, can be



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recognized by सम्यक् ज्ञानं, सम्यक् आत्मविचारं - by proper enquiry on the nature of जीव, जगत् and ईश्वर, as unfolded by the words of the Upanishads, by the three-fold means of enquiry, namely

प्रणिपातनं, परिप्रश्नं and सेवनं - by the diligent study of the Upanishads followed by reflection on the content of the Upanishad teachings through repeated questioning of one's own understanding of the Upanishad words, and at the same time doing all of one's daily duties totally dedicated to परमेश्वर with कर्मयोग बुद्धि and अनन्य ईश्वर भक्ति.

Even to undertake such an enquiry on the nature of आत्मा - The Self I, it is absolutely necessary for one to cultivate the personal qualities of total commitment to सत्यं तपस् and ब्रह्मचर्य in daily life. Therefore, the Upanishad says:

हि - Indeed

नित्यं सत्येन एष आत्मा लभ्यः - By being truthful at all times, This आत्मा, The आत्मा, The Self I, already in oneself, can be gained, can be reached, can be recognized.

नित्यं सत्यं - means being truthful in thought, word and deed at all times. As the Veda mantra says

वाङ् मे मनसि प्रतिष्ठिता, मनो मे वाचि प्रतिष्ठितं - There must be complete straight-forwardness, proper alignment, clarity and focus in all of one's thoughts, words and actions

नित्यं - at all times. That is indeed ज्ञान साधनं - means helpful for gaining आत्म ज्ञानं - Self-knowledge. Further,

नित्यं तपसा एष आत्मा लभ्यः - This आत्मा, The Self I already in oneself, can be reached and recognized by being in तपस् at all times. तपसा here means इन्द्रिय मन एकाग्रतया - by being self-disciplined in the body, mind and intellect level with single-pointed devotion to the pursuit of आत्मज्ञानं - Self-knowledge. Simply hearing the Upanishad words is easy enough. But listening to the Upanishad words requires concentrated attention of mind and बुद्धि to what one is hearing. Such listening is एकाग्र तपस्, which is the self-discipline needed for मननं and निदिध्यासनं - reflection and absorption of the content of Upanishad words.

One must diligently cultivate this quality of listening for one to be able to gain आत्मज्ञानं from the words of the Upanishads. Further,



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नित्यं ब्रह्मचर्येण एष आत्मा लभ्यः - This आत्मा, The Self I, already in oneself, can be reached and recognized by leading a life of ब्रह्मचर्यम् at all times, through a life-long commitment to the pursuit of ब्रह्मविद्या knowledge, which means total commitment to knowledge and service at all times. Even though total commitment to सत्यं, तपस् and ब्रह्मचर्यम् are indicated here as three distinct pre-requirements for gaining आत्म ज्ञानं - Self-knowledge, in fact, they are only three distinct expressions of the same ONE all-inclusive pre-requirement, namely सत्यं, for the successful pursuit of सम्यक् ज्ञानं, The परमपुरुषार्थ - The Highest Goal of Life, the overriding purpose of life.

Through such commitment to a life of truthfulness in thought, word and deed, self-discipline in body, mind and intellect, and the pursuit of ब्रह्मविद्या knowledge and ईश्वर कैङ्कर्यम् every day

क्षीणदोषाः सन् - and thus being naturally freed from all impurities and obstructions in one's अन्तःकरण - mind and बुद्धि

यतयः यत्नशलाः परमपुरुषार्थं प्रयत्नाः - those who are in the unbroken pursuit of the Highest Goal of Life, the overriding purpose of life, through Upanishad knowledge पश्यन्ति हि - they certainly see, they certainly recognize clearly, directly and immediately

यं तं आत्मानं - That आत्मा, The ब्रह्मन्, The परमेश्वर, The Self I

अन्तःशरीरे - each in one's own body vehicle, in one's own बुद्धि as

ज्योतिर्मय शुभ्रः रुक्मवर्णः शुद्ध आत्मा - The Ever-bright Self-effulgent light, free from any shadow whatsoever

शुभ्रः- Absolutely Pure Consciousness Itself, as Self I Itself, free from any roles such as कर्ता, भोक्ता etc. - doer, enjoyer, etc,

Let us understand this clearly: ONESELF free from, independent of, any roles in life is indeed one's true SELF. If I say "I am the seer, hearer, thinker, or doer, and I myself am independent of all of them, the I in myself Itself is free from being the seer, the hearer, thinker or the doer. Then who am I? I am शुभ्रः- शुद्ध आत्मा - I am The Pure Self I Itself.

It is That शुद्ध आत्मा - The Pure Self I, the अन्तःशरीरे ज्योतिर्मय पश्यन्ति - those who are committed to the unbroken life-long pursuit of The परमपुरुषार्थ, The मोक्ष - Total Freedom, Absolute Happiness, Total fulfillment in life, ultimately do see, do recognize,



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do reach, each in one's own बुद्धि, in one's own body vehicle, as ज्योति स्वरूप शुद्ध  
चैतन्य आत्मा - as The ever-bright, self-effulgent, Pure-consciousness, The Self I Itself.

Usually in Vedanta, the word यतयः refers to सन्यासीs - renunciates those who renounce all worldly pursuits. We must understand "renunciation" properly; simply because one takes some vows of renunciation in a ritual, and alters one's lifestyle, changing one's name and external appearance, one does not, and cannot become a सन्यासी. Sri Krishna defines सन्यास as:

काम्यानां कर्मणां न्यासं (G 18-2)

Renunciation of all काम्य कर्मs - कर्मs prompted by desires of various kinds such as health, wealth, name, fame, power, पुण्य, पाप, heaven, etc. Renunciation of all such काम्य कर्मs is called सन्यास. काम्य कर्मs include every कर्म which yields a कर्मफल - a result of action. So long as one entertains the notion of doership, every action of that person has कर्मफल, and consequently, all actions of that person naturally become काम्य कर्मs - desire prompted actions, whether or not one seeks or expects, or cares for that कर्मफल. Whatever be one's disposition towards one's कर्मफल, that disposition itself is the person's desire with respect to one's own कर्म.

Therefore, for the person who entertains the notion of doership, all actions are काम्य कर्मs. Therefore, यतयः - true सन्यासीs are those from whom the notion of doership in action has naturally and completely disappeared. Such यतयः are ज्ञानीs, who do certainly recognize the आत्मा - The Self I as ONESELF Itself.

Highlighting further the need for, and the power and glory of सम्यक् ज्ञानं, सम्यक् आत्मविचारं - proper enquiry on the nature of जीव-जगत् and ईश्वर, through the means of सत्यं, तपस् and ब्रह्मचर्यम्, for successful pursuit of the परमपुरुषार्थ - the Highest Goal of Life, namely आत्मदर्शनं - Self-recognition, the Upanishad says:

49. सत्यं एव जयते न अनृतं  
सत्येन पन्था विततो देवयानः ।  
येन आक्रमन्ति ऋषयो हि आप्तकामाः  
यत्र तत् सत्यस्य परमं निधानं ॥

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सत्यं एव जयते

Truth alone wins  
Truth always wins  
Truth surely wins

As we have already seen, सत्यं and धर्मम् are inseparable. सत्यं is concerned with being and धर्मम् is concerned with doing. Being and doing together constitute one's entire life. Therefore, here सत्यं means being truthful in thought, word, and deed at all times, together with proper conduct, ethical behavior, and good moral character at all times, under all circumstances of life. That सत्यं alone wins, always wins, surely wins, whatever be one's endeavors in life, from time to time. This Upanishad message also defines success in life for all of us, both in terms of values, and in terms of commitment to knowledge and service of any kind.

Further, in the expression सत्यं एव जयते, the Upanishad word सत्य also refers to both the immediate means as well as the ultimate end, and everything in between. As the immediate means, for the ultimate end, सत्यं is only सामान्य सत्यं - that which one knows as true, to the best of one's knowledge at any given time. But while this सामान्य सत्यं - ordinary truth is ever subject to change, as one progressively uplifts oneself in one's level of awareness, it is never contrary to the Absolute Truth, The Ultimate End.

Being so committed to सामान्य सत्यं - ordinary truth in thought, word and deed at all times and under all circumstances of daily life is itself तपस् - a form of intense self-discipline. Through such सामान्य सत्यं and तपस्, when one commits oneself to a life-long pursuit of the ultimate end, The सत्यस्य सत्यं - The Absolute Truth, never subject to change, behind all forms of ordinary truth, one naturally commits oneself to the pursuit of ब्रह्म विद्या knowledge. Such commitment to the pursuit of ब्रह्मविद्या knowledge is indeed ब्रह्मचर्यम्.

Living a life of ब्रह्मचर्यम्, one progressively uplifts oneself in one's sense awareness with respect to one's ultimate goal in life. परम पुरुषार्थ - namely recognizing the nature of That सत्यस्य सत्यं - The Truth behind all truths about जीव-जगत् and ईश्वर, through proper understanding and appreciation of the words of the Upanishads gained through प्रणिपादनं परिप्रश्नं and सेवनं. This process of upliftment in one's sense of awareness is ज्ञानसाधन ज्ञानं - सम्यक् आत्मविचारं - self-upliftment through proper enquiry on the true nature of all existence.



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Through such सम्यक् आत्मविचारं - self-upliftment through proper enquiry on the nature of all existence, one ultimately recognizes That सत्यस्य सत्यं - The Truth of all truths, as ONESELF Itself, unfolded in the Upanishads as सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म, ब्रह्म एव इदं विश्वं, भूत भव्यस्य ईशानः, ज्योति स्वरूप शुद्ध चैतन्य आत्मा, ब्रह्मन्, The परमेश्वर, The आत्मा, The Self I. Such recognition of सत्यस्य सत्यं - The Absolute Truth, is indeed सम्यक् ज्ञानं, अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं - immediate recognition as ब्रह्मैवाहं अस्मि - I am indeed ब्रह्मन्, अयं आत्मा ब्रह्मन् - The Self I in myself is ब्रह्मन् Itself.

Thus, in the expression सत्यं एव जयते, the Upanishad word सत्यं stands for सामान्य सत्यं, तपस्, ब्रह्मचर्यम्, सम्यक् आत्मविचारं and indeed सम्यक् ज्ञानं, which is indeed सत्यस्य सत्यं - The Absolute Truth of all existence, the ultimate end to be reached. It is That सत्यं satyam which alone wins, always wins, surely wins. Here winning is gaining The परम पुरुषार्थ - मोक्ष - Total Freedom, Absolute Happiness in life.

When the Upanishad says: सत्यं एव जयते - Truth alone wins, that statement itself means untruth can never win. Still the Upanishad wants to emphasize that fact, and hence adds the statement:

न अनृतं (जयते) Untruth can never win. अनृतं - untruth includes deception, fraud, impropriety of any kind in all worldly transactions. If one chooses to think, as many do, that one can hide one's untruthful actions from others, and thereby escape the negative consequences of such actions arising from man-made laws, the Upanishad here reminds the person that one can never hide one's untruthful or improper actions from ONESELF and eternal laws of कर्म. The consequences of such actions are immediate in the forms of fear, conflict and self-degradation in one's स्वभाव गुणs, not only in one's present life, but also in all lives thereafter. On the other hand, being truthful in thought, word and deed at all times, together with proper conduct, ethical behavior and good moral character at all times, under all circumstances of life, what does that do to a person? The Upanishad says:

सत्येन देवयानः पन्थाः विततः

सत्येन - By following सत्यं and धर्मम् as indicated above

देवयानः पन्थाः - the paths of spiritual striving, the paths following which the देवs, the celestial beings such as अग्नि, वायु, वरुण etc. have reached exalted positions they are



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in this universe, those paths are विततः - broadly laid out, wide open to every such person, every person committed to सत्यं, तपस्, ब्रह्मचर्यम्, सम्यक् आत्मविचारं and सम्यक् ज्ञानं. Further

येन ऋषयः आप्तकामाः (सन्) आक्रमन्ति  
यत्र तत् सत्यस्य परमं निधानं

येन, येन देवयानः पन्थाः - By the same paths of spiritual striving followed by celestial beings, the देवस

ऋषयः - the enlightened Rishis (who are still human beings, not yet become celestial beings)

आप्तकामाः (भवन्ति) - they become fulfilled in all their desires, which means

विगत तृष्णाः भवन्ति - they become totally free from all kinds of longings and cravings, etc. for कर्मस and कर्मफलस - and they acquire the disposition of total वैराग्य - dispassion towards कर्मस and कर्मफलस

आप्तकामाः (सन्) - thus, having become totally desire-free

आक्रमन्ति - they ascend in their spiritual ladder, and ultimately

प्राप्नुवन्ति - they do reach

यत्र - where exists

तत् सत्यस्य परमं निधानं - That Supreme Abode of सत्यस्य सत्यं - The Truth of all truths, the ब्रह्मन्, The परमेश्वर, The आत्मा already in oneself, as The Self I, ONESELF Itself.

How does That सत्यस्य परमं निधानं - The Abode of the Truth of all truths, The ब्रह्मन्, look like, and where, in one's own self, can one reach and recognize That ब्रह्मन् as The आत्मा, The Self I Itself, are said in the next verse, which we will see next time.